#### The Trey O' Hearts

(Continued from Page Three)

fore they could gain the desert on the far side of the hills.

Only at long intervals did they draw rein to permit Hopi Jim to make reconnoiseance of the lower trail that threaded the valley on the far side of

Toward noon he returned in haste from the last of these surveys -scrambling recklessly down the mountain-side and throwing himself upon his horse with the advice

"We've headed 'em-can make it now if we ride like all get-out!"

For half an hour more they pushed on at the best speed to be obtained from their weary unimals, at length drawing rein at a point where the trail crossed the ridge and widened out a clear drop to the latter from the brink of a good two hundred feet.

the valley evoked a grant of satisfac death snapping at their heels, tion from Hopf Jim.

they come! Ten minutes more

with unspeakable cruel significance. "Texas will sleep better tonight when he knows how I've squared the

deal for him!" the bandit declared demanded, relning her horse in beside camp on the edge of a sharp declivity Marrophat as the latter dismounted.

very lip of the chasm.

voice. "Simple-neat-efficient-ch." What more can you ask? She answered only with an irrepressthle gesture of horror. Marrophat's of Hopi Jun

laugh followed her as she turned away. she made out indistinctly the faintly marked line of the lower trail; and head immediately she caught a glumpse of

were straining themselves against the from fingers numbed with pain. boulder without budging it an inch. for all its apparent nicety of poise. For her mind, but it was immediately exand uttered a few words of which only

Kneeling beside the boulder he dug rawhide lariat. busily for an instant, then sodged the fuse, and breaking off, edged on his length of the fuse by the distance of where the rock must fall

Hurriedly unbuttoning her jacket, stub of a pencil scribbled three words ing to admire his handiwork. on its face- Danger! Go back!

rock, she bound the card to it with declivity, a fair mark, stark against studied nursing, haven't you? a bit of string; and with one more the sky, for one who stood in the valbackward glance to make sure she lay below, holding his rifle with eage.

Hopi Jim was meticulously shorten-

within two minutes of the danger what was going on above.

feet of the leading horseman.

She saw him rein in suddenly, dismount, cast a look aloft, then dismount and pick up the warning.

As the others joined him, he derophat jumped up and ran back, each bjuff, seizing and holding his horse by nose

and bridle. Constrained to do likewise lest she lose her mount, Judith waited with a lightened heart

The explosion smote dull echoes from the flanks of the Painted hills, all droweing in the noon-day hush; the boulder teetered rejuctantly on the brink, then disappeared with a tearing sound followed by a rush of earth and gravel; a wide gap appeared in the brink of the trail.

Leaving Marrophat to hold the two frightened horses while the girl soothed her own, the bandit rushed to

the edge, threw himself flat and swore as he rose

From the canyon below a dull noise of galloping hoofs advertised too plainly the failure of their attempt.

And Hopl Jim turned back only to find Judith mounted, reining her horse in between him and Marrophat, and prepared to give emphasis to what she had to say with an automatic pistol that nestled snugly in her palm,

"One moment, Mr. Slade," she sug-gested evenly. "Just a moment before you break the sad news to Mr. Marro phat. I've something to say that needs your attention-likewise, your respect It is this: I am parting company with you and Mr. Marrophat. I am riding on toward the west, by this trail. If either of you care to follow me"-the automatic flashed ominously in the sun glare-"it will be with full knowledge of the consequences. Mr. Marrophat will enlighten you if you have any doubt of my ability to take care of myself in such affairs as this. If you are well advised, you will turn back and report failure to my father."

She nodded curtly and swung her horse round. "And what shall I tell your father from you?" Marrophat demanded

"What you please," the girl replied, flashing an impish smile over-shoulder. "But, since when I part company with you, I part with him as well-for all of me, you may tell him to go to the

"Well," Mr. Marrophat admitted con- Roanoke Rapids,

fidentially to Mr. Slade, "I'm damned! "And that ain't all," Mr. Slade confided in Mr. Marrophat, whipping out his own revolver: "You're being held up, too. I'll take those guns of your n, friend, and what else you've got about you that's of value, including your hoss and when you get back to old man Trine you can just tell him, with my best compliments, that I've quit the job and lit out after that daughter of his'n. She's a heap sight more attractive than nineteen thousand dollars. and not half so hard to earn!"

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Burnt Fingers. Once she had lost touch with her father's creatures, the girl drew rein and went on more slowly and cau

Below her, in the valley, the lower upon a long, broad ledge that over- trail wound its facile way. From time hung the valley of the lower trail, with to time she could discern upon some naked stretch of its length a cloud of dust, or perhaps three mounted fig One hasty look back and down into ures, scurrying madly on with fear of

it was within an hour of midnight, "Just in time," he asseverated "Here a night bell-clear and bitter cold on the heights, and bright with moon His smile answered Marrophat's light, when Alan's party made its last pause and camped to rest against the dawn, unconscious of the fact that, a quarter of a mile above them, on the upper trail, a lonely woman paused "What are you going to do" Judith when they paused and made her own

The level shafts of the rising sun A gesture drew her attention to a awakened her. She sat up, rubbed her huge boulder poised insecurely on the eyes, yawned, stretched limbs stiff with the hardship of sleeping on un-"We're going to tip that over on yielding, sun-baked earth-and of a your friends, Miss Judith!" Marrophat sudden started up, surprised by the replied, with a smack of relish in his grating of footsteps on the earth behind her.

Before she could turn, however, she was caught and wrapped in the arms

She mustered all her strength and For some moments she strained her wits and will for one last strugglevision vainly, endeavoring to pene and in a frenzied moment managed to trate the turbulent currents of super- break his hold a trifle, enough to enheated air that filled the valley. Then, able her to enatch at the pistol hang-

But it exploded harmlessly, spendthree small figures, mounted, tolling ing its bullet on the blue of the mornpainfully toward the point where death ing sky. The bandit caught her wrist awaited them like a boit from the blue. In time, thrust it aside and subjected Hastily she glanced over-shoulder: it to such cruel pressure and such sav-Hopt Jim and Marrophat, ignoring her, age wrenchings that the pistol dropped

And now all hint of mercy left his eyes, remained only the glare of rage. an instant a wild hope flashed through. He put forth all his strength in turn, and Judith was as a child in his hands. orcised when Hopi Jim stepped back in half a minute he had her helpless. in as much time more her back was two-"dynamite" and "fuse"-reached breaking across his knee, while he sound her with loop after loop of his

Then, leaving her momentarily stick to his satisfaction, attached the supine on the ground. Hopi Jim caught and unhobbled her horse, and without belly to the edge of the cliff and troubling to saddle it, lifted the girl looked down, carefully calculating the to its back, and placed her there, face upward catching her hands and feet, the party down below from the spot as they fell on either flank of the animal, with more loops of that unbreak-But while he was so engaged and able rawhide, and dettly placing the Marrophat aided him, all easer inter- master knot of the hitch that bound est, Judith was taking advantage of this human pack well beyond possi- game."-Puck. bility of her reach

She panted a prayer for mercy. He she whipped a playing card from her taughed in her face, bent and kissed pocket, a trey o' hearts, and with the her heatally and stepped back laugh; you know that kissing breeds

Thus he etood for an instant be-Then finding a small, flattish bit of tween the horse and the edge of the ing the fuse, Marrophat kneeling by the noise of debris kicked over the edge by the struggling man and In the canyon below the three were woman had drawn his attention to

Alan pressed the trigger and the It was no trick at all to drop the shot sounded clear in the morning stone so that it fell within a dozen stillness. Judith saw a look of aggrieved amazement cross the face of

Hom Jim Stade Then he threw his hands out, clawed blindly at the air, staggered, reeled against the horse's flank so heavily tached the card and showed it to them that it shied in fright, and abruptly At the same time Hopi Jim and Mar- shot from sight over the edge of the

Continued Next Week

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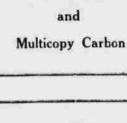
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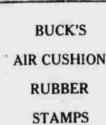
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